

7

History-Social
Science Standard
7.7.3.



Broken Jade and Tarnished Gold

California Education and the Environment Initiative

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Golden Dreams of the Spanish Empire



By the mid-1500s, Spain was one of the most powerful kingdoms in the world. The country was in a period of expansion that would build their empire and leave few parts of the world untouched. The Spanish believed they had a divine right to rule the people they conquered and to convert them to Christianity. They also believed in their right to take land and riches and to use these resources to increase their power in both the “Old World” and in the “New World.”

Under the reigns of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and their successors, conquistadors set out to claim new lands for the Spanish Empire. Vasco Núñez de Balboa was one of them. After many other adventures at sea, he organized a small expedition to cross what is now the Isthmus of Panama. As he reached the center of the Isthmus, he climbed a mountain and looked out over the Pacific Ocean. He claimed all the land and the sea he could see in the name of Spain.

An Island of Gold

A few years later, a Spanish-appointed governor of the country we know today

as Guatemala, heard a story about an incredible island where only women lived. A queen, Queen Calafia, ruled this land. The land overflowed with gold and pearls, and the women made weapons of pure gold because there was no other metal on the island. Then the governor heard a second story. It was about the Seven Cities of Cibola. These cities had streets paved with gold and silver, and were to the north.

After hearing these stories, the governor set off to look for the “golden” island. Leaving the west coast of mainland Mexico, his men soon came upon and claimed what the governor named “Santa Cruz Island” for Spain; however, neither he nor



Vasco Núñez de Balboa

his men found any gold there. The governor sent Francisco de Ulloa north, up the Gulf of California to search for the seven cities of gold. Ulloa discovered that “Santa Cruz Island” was not an island at all, but a finger of desert land connected to a larger piece



Columbus with King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella

of the continent (what is now called Baja California).

Meanwhile, the king of Spain was finding it difficult to govern the new lands in Spain's Empire from the other side of the globe. Some of the governors were not sending the riches they were finding back to Spain. To get more control of the Spanish colonies in the Americas, the king put a leader, called a viceroy, in charge of all of "New Spain." His name was Antonio de Mendoza. Mendoza sent a

conquistador, Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, to explore and claim the lands of the west coast of California for Spain.

Alta California

In 1542, Cabrillo sailed into what is now called San Diego Bay. Without the promise of gold, silver, and riches, he saw no reason to claim the lands north of Mexico for Spain. However, fur traders from Russia had landed on the coast of what is today Alaska. When the viceroy of

New Spain heard this, he sent his military commanders and Franciscan monks to settle "Alta California" to keep it from being claimed by Russia.

In 1769, the conquistador Gaspar de Portolà led the first Spanish settlers to San Diego. He built a presidio (fortress) there. Then he continued up the coast. Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan, went with him. Serra founded Catholic missions along the way; eventually the Franciscans would establish 21 missions in



Father Junípero Serra

California. The Spanish also constructed other presidios for defense, and pueblos (towns) to develop the territory.

A Growing Climate

The missionaries and Spanish settlers brought seeds, fruit trees, grapevines, cattle, and other goods from Spain and Mexico to the lands of California. The climate in Alta California was mild, and there was plenty of rain in the winter. In a short time, the settlers' orchards and gardens overflowed with fruits and vegetables. The settlers built their homes out of adobe, a dark brown clay mined from the earth and mixed with straw. They made red tiles to put on

the roofs. The viceroy gave lands to Spanish individuals and families for farming and ranching, and to soldiers as a reward for military service. These "gifts" of land were called "Rancho Grants." When people back in Spain heard about these gifts, many more settlers wanted to come to Alta California to make their fortunes.

Over time, the people of New Spain began to think of themselves as separate from the Spanish Empire. Many of the Spanish conquistadors' children and grandchildren

had been born in the New World and had never seen Spain. They did not feel they owed anything to the king, or that they should send the resources of their land far away, to be used by people in a country they had never known.

War with Spain

In 1810, many Mexican-born Spanish colonists went to war with Spain. The people wanted their independence from the viceroys and governors that had been appointed by the king. The king of Spain



San Diego Mission bells



Serra Museum on Presidio Hill

withdrew all his support from the missions, pueblos, and presidios throughout New Spain in the hope of ending the war, but the Mexican-born Spanish had many resources of their own. The war between the Mexican-born Spanish and Spain went on for 11 years, before the Treaty of Córdoba gave Mexico its independence in 1821. Direct control of the New World by a Spanish king suddenly came to an end, and California became the northern territory of a new nation.

Gold in Los Angeles

It was not many years after that when, in 1842, a Mexican rancher named Francisco

López, tired from herding cattle, one day took a nap in the shade of an oak tree in Placerita Canyon, about 35 miles north of the Pueblo de Los Angeles. It was his 40th birthday, and Francisco had a dream he was floating in a pool of gold. Legend has it that when he woke up, Francisco dug up some wild onions for a snack. There, clinging to the roots of the onions, were several nuggets of pure gold. Three hundred years after Cabrillo had sailed into San Diego Bay, had the gold that had eluded so many in the lands of California finally been found?

López's discovery, and the rush for gold that it caused, was small compared to the discovery made by James Marshall in 1848 and the more famous Gold Rush that followed it. The tree under which Francisco López took his famous nap has been preserved, bearing the name "Oak of the Golden Dream," a testament to the fact that James Marshall was not the first to dream of gold in California, and that the decisions that both individuals and empires make are often influenced by the need for and control of natural resources.

Aztec Origins: The Children of Huitzilopochtli

The following story is told from the perspective of a resident of Tenochtitlán in 1450.

The world has been created and destroyed four times. In these four worlds, great gods and peoples have risen and fallen. Let me tell you about the rise of my people, who after generations of wandering have come to rule over this great city and the world beyond.

Our story began as the great flood waters that destroyed the fourth world dried with the rising of the fifth Sun.

At this time, we found ourselves in the barren north. Seven caves sheltered our seven ethnic groups from the harsh desert Sun. One by one, each ethnic group left its cave looking for a better place to grow and prosper. As they wandered, we chose to stay.

But as the land got drier and drier, our time came. Guided by stars, we were led to a lagoon filled with beautiful cranes. We called it Aztlán, “the place of the cranes.” There we built a village and named ourselves “Aztec,” meaning “the people of Aztlán.”

Our people settled and began to prosper. But we had not gained the special protection of any one of our many gods. Our priests wandered, searching for guidance. One day, they were led into a cavern along the shores of the lake. Here they found the wooden head of the god Huitzilopochtli (Wee-tzee-lo-**poch**-tee). In exchange for our undying devotion, he promised to make our wandering people lords of all the world.



Huitzilopochtli

Huitzilopochtli commanded us to leave our village and travel south from Aztlán to the place called Coatepetl (“the hill of the serpent”). It was here that Huitzilopochtli had been born. He left us at the foot of a great tree that connected earth with heaven above and the underworld below. Then he climbed the mountain to visit his mother, the earth goddess.

As we waited below, the chief priest, Huitzil (Weet-**tzeel**), commanded that we build a temple of wood at the bottom of the hill. After

finishing a small temple, Huitzil commanded that we create an even larger one by felling the great tree where Huitzilopochtli had left us. But as we began to cut it with our axes, it split apart. The Earth shook as it came crashing to the ground, smashing the temple and killing Huitzil.

When Huitzilopochtli returned from the top of the mountain, he was angry to see this destruction. He named Mexi our new chief priest, and as his followers, our people were renamed the Mexica. To punish us, Huitzilopochtli sent us into the desert to wander for many more years.

In the desert we were given many signs. One day, we saw three bodies stretched across spiny cacti. Their chests had been cut open and their hearts removed. This is how Huitzilopochtli taught us to honor him with the sacrifice of human hearts.

Finally, our years of wandering seemed close to an end, as we came over the mountains to see a great green valley surrounded by white peaks. In the center of this was a great lake.

We passed two great cities inhabited by the gods of the past worlds. One was Tula. Here we learned how to grow crops in the lake and how to bring fresh water to our cities. The other city we called Teotihuacán, which means “the home of the many gods.”

But this valley was already filled with the children and grandchildren of the other six ethnic groups that had wandered from the caves years before. For years, we acted as servants of these peoples. Finally we were given a small rocky patch of land by the lord of the Culhuacán (Kool-wah-**kan**).

Over time, the Culhuacán people began to accept us, and we began to finally settle. But



Symbol of Mexico

this was not what our god Huitzilopochtli had in mind. One day, he spoke to the priests and asked them to go to the lord of the Culhuacán people. They were to ask for his daughter to be Huitzilopochtli's bride.

When the priests arrived, the lord of the Culhuacán was pleased they had asked his daughter to receive this honor. He thought his daughter would be worshipped as a goddess after being wed to Huitzilopochtli. On the day of the wedding, he came with many gifts. After being led into a dark, smoky temple, he was horrified to see that his daughter had been sacrificed to the gods.

His angry army chased us to the center of this lake. It was here, among the reeds, that Huitzilopochtli gave us the sign to start our great city, Tenochtitlán. On the exact spot where we saw an eagle perched on a cactus with a rattlesnake in its beak, we started our great city. It is from here that we have conquered the world to honor Huitzilopochtli and the other gods.

Inca Origins: The Children of Inti

The following story is told from the perspective of a resident of Cuzco in 1450.



The Sacred Valley

In the mountains not far from Cuzco is a place called Pacariqtambo (Pah-kar-reek-**tam**-bow), which means “the house of dawn.” Here, there is a hill with three caves. The ancestors of all who live here today came from these caves. From the cave on the right came a tribe of people we call Suti (Soo-teek). From the cave on the left came a tribe of people we call Maras. The Inca, who were destined to rule the world, emerged from the center cave.

All the royal Inca today came from the four brothers and four sisters born in this cave. Manco Cápac was the leader of these eight Inca. Inti, the Sun god, gave him a long golden staff. He was to guide his people to a place where he could sink its length completely into the deep soil.

The journey was long and hard. After some time, the group began to get annoyed with one of the brothers, Ayar Kachi, who was a cruel troublemaker. One day, they tricked him into



Rainbow over valley

going into a cave, and before he could come out, they rolled a huge stone over its entrance, trapping him forever.

No matter how far they wandered, it seemed they never found a place where the soil was deep and rich enough to sink the golden staff. Finally, one day, they climbed a high hill at a place called Huanacauri (Wah-na-**kow**-ree). As they watched, a huge rainbow shone over the fertile green valley below them. It was a sign they were near the promised land. On this spot, a second brother, Ayar Uchu, was turned to stone. That stone is still one of our important shrines.

Now only two brothers, Manco Cápac and Ayar Auca (**Ow**-kah), and their four sisters remained. They wandered the green valley below looking for the place to found their city. Finally, after two years, Manco Cápac found a spot where his gold stick sank all the way into

the soil. As he pulled it from the soil, he saw that Ayar Auca had turned into a stone pillar.

That very spot became the center of Cuzco. The pillar of Ayar Auca is covered in gold at the heart of the temple of the Sun.

Along with the Suti and Maras, there were many other tribes who lived in this valley. Manco Cápac divided them into two groups called *ayllus* (ai-yous) and taught each the way they should work together to build the greatest empire the world has ever known.



Inca celebration

The Aztec Empire in 1519



Life in the Valley of Mexico



Aztec marketplace

The Aztec people were farmers from the lands northwest of the Valley of Mexico. They called themselves *Mexica*. When they arrived in the valley, they found people living in dozens of small kingdoms or city-states, constantly waging war on each other. Anyone powerful enough to conquer these city-states could force the losers to pay tribute in the form of resources and land.

Besides being farmers, the Mexica were fierce warriors. They settled in a marshy area on the west side of Lake Texcoco, and they began to fight the people of the city-states next to them—in Texcoco and Tlacopan. At first, they suffered many defeats. Then, one of the Mexica

leaders, Itzcoatl, forged an alliance with the king of Texcoco and went to war with the kingdom of Tlacopan. After many battles, the Mexica joined with Texcoco and Tlacopan to form the Triple Alliance—three kingdoms in one. Itzcoatl became the Aztec Emperor over all.

After gaining control of the lands around Lake Texcoco, Itzcoatl had the people drain the marshes near their capitol, Tenochtitlán, and expand the city. Calling on the best mathematicians and architects in the valley, Itzcoatl ordered canals dug to bring in fresh water and wash away waste from the city. His architects created “floating” garden plots, called chinampas, in and around the lake, which used

the soil and nutrient-rich water to raise enough crops to feed the inhabitants of the city.

Aztec warriors continued to fight other city-states for land and resources. They had two military goals: one was to expand the empire, and the other was to fulfill a spiritual commitment to their gods. Once defeated, the king expected his enemies to pay tribute to the empire. The defeated city-states brought textiles, food, gold, silver, and other luxuries to Tenochtitlán four times a year. The emperor took most of the wealth for himself, and shared part with his nobles and warriors. Peasants farmed the land around cities and exchanged food and military service for a safe place to live.

The Aztecs believed that their gods had used blood to create human life and wanted blood in return. The emperor expected his warriors to do more than merely defeat their enemies. He rewarded them for capturing as many enemy soldiers as they could and bringing them back alive. Aztec priests then sacrificed these enemy warriors in elaborate ceremonies on top of pyramids, like the Great Temple in Tenochtitlán. It was a huge pyramid with two temples built on top. One honored the Sun god and the other the god of rain and the harvest. The hearts of the sacrificed were offered to the gods as tribute.

When an Aztec ruler died, the empire passed to his eldest brother. If this brother died, the empire passed to his brother's eldest son. Montezuma I followed Itz'coatl as emperor. He created schools that would prepare boys to be warriors and teach girls to sing, dance, and to become mothers of warriors to serve in the Aztec army. The lands in the empire

were placed under the control of clans (large families) related to the emperor. The clans paid tribute to the emperor, using the labor of the peasants and slaves under their control. The Aztec Empire also had a large merchant class, the *pochteca*, which managed the exchange of goods and resources along protected trade routes throughout the valley.

The Aztecs kept track of all the gold, copper, food, and military services that were collected as tribute. Since they did not have an alphabet, they made records with colorful drawings in a document called the *codex*. As the empire grew, more trade routes were established. Aztec merchants exchanged textiles, stone tools, herbs, and dyes with people as far away as Central America. These products were also recorded in the *codex*.

By the 1500s, the great Aztec Empire had grown to include over 80,000 square miles. It stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf Coast, covering most of what is now central Mexico and Guatemala. Fifteen million people paid tribute to Montezuma II, who ruled the empire from 1502 to 1520. However, things were not as stable as they seemed. The Aztec leaders often demanded that people pay more in goods and services than they could afford. In addition, the practice of human sacrifice had left fewer citizens in some areas to do the work the empire required. As a result, the people in different parts of the empire would rise up against the Aztec leadership. The emperors maintained military garrisons throughout the valley to put down such revolts, and they spent most of their time waging war on people that had been conquered more than once.

The Inca Empire in 1532



Life in Tawantinsuyu



Inca ceremonial dance

In a land of rugged mountains, tropical forests, and desert coastline, the Incas built the largest empire in the Americas. They did all of this in around 100 years. The empire included most of the land that is now Ecuador and Peru. It also included parts of Bolivia, Argentina, Columbia, and Chile. They called their empire *Tawantinsuyu*, which means “land of the four regions.”

The original Inca tribe built the city of Cuzco, in what is now Peru. The people believed that the god of the Sun was the first Inca ruler, and that each ruler that followed was like the Sun god. By 1500, the ruler was known as *Sapa Inca*, which means “unique Inca.” In order to rule the empire, he had to be a descendant

of the original tribe. When the Sapa Inca died, his son would take his place. The royal court would continue to rule under the new leader.

The Sapa Inca ruled from the capitol city of Cuzco. The empire had four regions, or quarters—Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Southeast—and the corner of each quarter met in Cuzco. The quarters had their own governors, called apos, who were in charge of local leaders. Local leaders were in charge of agriculture, mining, building roads and temples, and managing their cities. They also saw to it that every citizen did his or her work, because in Inca society, laziness was not allowed. In fact, it was punishable by death!

The Sapa Inca required citizens of the empire to do a certain number of days of work each year. They called this work *mita*. Mita could be military service, labor in the silver mines, or work building roads. Even the Sapa Inca participated in mita. The mita also included the exchange of religious objects and art from people in conquered lands. As Inca warriors brought more tribes into the empire, more people paid tribute in the form of work, gold, silver, pottery, food stores, and other resources.

The heart of the Inca Empire was the Sacred Valley near Cuzco. The river Urubamba flows through the valley, making the land ideal for growing crops, particularly maize. In addition, the area was defensible on all sides from attack, so the Inca built a large fortress there at Ollantaytambo. The Inca also built a system of roads that connected all the cities in their vast empire. The main roads to the east ran high into the mountains (from what is now Quito, Ecuador, to Mendoza, Argentina) for more than 3,200 miles (5150 kilometers)—longer than the United States is wide! The main roads on the coast ran along the western foothills for more than 2,500 miles (4000 kilometers), north to south. More than 20 roads crossed over the Andes Mountains, connecting the Inca lands in the east to the lands in the west, many of them carved into the mountainsides at 16,000 feet (4880 meters) above sea level. Some were little more than footpaths, while others were as wide as 13 feet (4 meters) and paved with smooth stones.

Nobles, soldiers, and local officials used the roads to travel between cities. When the Sapa Inca traveled through his empire,

porters carried him in a raised chair, followed by thousands of soldiers. Peasants had to have special permission to walk along the roads. The roads were also important in moving goods and resources around the empire. The Inca rulers built and maintained large storehouses of resources—dried food, drink, clothing, tools, and other items—to be used by people in the “four regions” in times of need. The storehouses were placed along the roads for easy access, and they held enough supplies to keep the local population alive for up to 10 years.

Young runners carried messages and special goods (like fresh fish and seaweed from the Pacific) between cities. The Incas called them *chasquis*. A young man would carry a message 3.7 to 5.6 miles (6 to 9 kilometers), and then hand it off to another runner who would then carry it for another leg of the journey. A group of chasquis could cover about 160 miles in a day.

At its height in the early 1500s, the Inca Empire included 772,204 square miles. Over 37 million people lived within its boundaries. The empire was so vast that the Sapa Inca needed a way to find out how large his empire really was. It was important to keep track of births and deaths, and how many tribes his warriors had conquered. It was necessary to know how many resources the empire had in its storehouses. To accomplish this, the Inca kept records on knotted strings, called *quipus*. Every year, accountants would bring their quipus to Cuzco and count them for the ruler. The Sapa Inca then knew what resources the people needed, and where they were needed. In this way, he “paved the road” for greater expansion of the empire.

The Spanish Empire in 1470



Life on the Iberian Peninsula



Spanish soldier and castle

Under many different rulers, people on the Iberian Peninsula had fought over territory, resources, and religion for more than 700 years. In 1469, two kingdoms joined together when their rulers married. Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon had similar goals. They felt it important to bring order to their kingdoms and to create greater prosperity. To accomplish this, they increased the power of the military and brought the nobility under their control. Their two kingdoms together became the kingdom of Spain.

The king and queen were both members of the Roman Catholic Church, and were very devout. They believed that it was their destiny

to bring all the kingdoms in the area into the Church. This strong belief made them begin to explore new lands. Ferdinand and Isabella's forces captured the kingdom of Granada in 1492. It was the last kingdom controlled by Muslims on the Iberian peninsula. They told the people living there that they would have to convert to Christianity, or face exile or death. It was an attempt by the king and queen to bring all people under the same system of politics and religious belief.

The kingdom of Spain was like all other kingdoms in Europe at the time. The ruler (king or queen) had inherited the throne or had taken it by force. Their word was law. The

nobility had some power over the people and resources on their own lands, and they paid tribute or tax to the ruler in some way. European rulers used the goods and valuables they received in tribute to build churches, roads, schools, and to keep an army to protect the people and lands of the kingdom. The peasant class lived on and worked the lands owned by the ruler or by the nobility, keeping just enough to survive and giving most of their harvest to the landowners in exchange for protection.

Portugal, the kingdom next to Spain, was also seeking new lands. The Portuguese were excellent ship builders, and had already explored the Azores and a few of the Canary Islands. The competition between Spain and Portugal grew. During this time, Christopher Columbus came to Queen Isabella and asked for her support. He believed that he could sail west from Spain and reach India by a shorter route. Isabella saw this as an opportunity to build Spain's power. If they could increase Spain's gold supply and control the spice trade, they would become the most powerful country in Europe. Their priests could also bring Catholicism to people in Asia. Spain decided to sponsor Columbus, and although he did not reach India as planned, Columbus' "discovery" of North America did bring power and wealth to Spain, eventually. The kingdom of Spain sponsored many other expeditions to the "New World" following Columbus' first voyage.

Most of the explorers who sailed to and claimed parts of North and South America for Spain were not from the nobility. They were ordinary businessmen or soldiers that had been part of the effort to bring the kingdom

of Spain together. They called themselves "conquistadors," which means "conquerors" in Spanish. The king and queen issued contracts to these people to explore and claim new lands in the name of Spain. In some cases, the conquistadors were given land and valuables for their efforts.

Queen Isabella died in 1504. As was the custom, the children of Ferdinand and Isabella would inherit the throne one day. After her death, Ferdinand continued to expand the Spanish Empire both in Europe and in the Americas. With royal permission, the conquistador Ponce de Leon claimed Puerto Rico for Spain, and Diego Velázquez conquered Cuba. Spain soon controlled all of the islands in the Caribbean, naming them "Hispaniola." The king rewarded these conquistadors by making them governors over the new lands, giving them the power to make some decisions locally.

When Ferdinand died, his grandson, Charles V, took the throne. He became the most powerful ruler in Europe. Charles became ruler of Germany, parts of Italy, France, and all of the territory claimed by Spain in the Americas. He commanded the governors in the Americas to send back to Spain as much gold, silver, and sugar as they could. The governors obeyed, and they began exploring more and more of the lands in the Americas in order to acquire the resources demanded by Spain. For many years, they were successful, and under Charles the Spanish Empire became larger and more powerful than any other empire in Europe. People called it "the empire on which the Sun never sets" because it controlled lands all over the globe.

Passage 1

Since the founding of the great city of Tenochtitlán, we honored the gods with all our devotion, and they brought us victory. But the last few years have been filled with ominous signs. One bright day, the moon swallowed the Sun, briefly turning the day black as night. Shortly after, the gods shook the great world tree. The trembling earth toppled buildings and killed many. Then one night a great ball of flame plunged down from the sky and crashed into the earth. Now, despite our years of devotion and sacrifice, the gods cover our bodies with bleeding sores. In the year of One Reed, strange vessels arrived on our borders. Strange men now march toward the city. Some say they may be the great army of the god Quetzalcóatl, who pledged to return one day and once again rule this land. I fear the end of this world is soon in coming. Surely the only way to survive is to make more sacrifices to our gods. Failing that, we should embrace the powerful god that protects these invaders.

Passage 2

I must gather an army to fight Atahualpa, my half-brother, before his greed destroys the whole of our empire. Just two months ago, my father, Huayna Cápac, was a strong emperor. He ruled all the corners of Earth from his home in the north. Then he was bewitched with a blazing fever and red spots that burst like foul-smelling insects over his body. As he was dying, he named his son and my brother Ninan Cuyuchi as the new emperor. But my brother also quickly fell to the evil spell, and his face became so hideous, he refused to let himself be seen. He died just two days later. Soon illness was striking the whole land. I was to be the next emperor, and I began marching north from Cuzco. But Atahualpa met me with an army of his own. Surely the secret to his victory was his evil magic. He must be stopped if our people are to be saved, and even now I am gathering forces and plotting his defeat.

Passage 3

When we first came ashore, I was terrified by the multitude of bloodthirsty savages that surrounded us. But as we march on, our small army remains healthy while their vast hordes fall stricken before us. In our explorations, we sometimes come across parts of the cities that lie quiet, with only the bodies of the dead to greet us. I now truly recognize the power of God. Surely he has sent these plagues against these heathens so they may feel his power. I know now that it is his will for us to rule this land and use its riches to glorify his holy church and the kingdom of Spain. Without fear, we climb their temples and smash their graven images, caked in filth and human blood. It will not be long before they see the sinfulness of their ways and turn toward the truth.



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